



Safety First, Fun Second in Toy Shopping

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MADISON – Each year there are a couple of toys that every child wants and every shopper is clamoring to get. But even the most popular toy may not be appropriate for the intended child or safe for other children in the home. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection asks consumers to think about the safety of each potential gift before taking it to the register this holiday season.

“There is an excitement that comes with getting your hands on the hottest toys during the holiday shopping season, but that feeling should not trump the question of whether a toy is right for the recipient,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. “The child’s age and development, along with the age of other children in the house needs to be considered when judging if a toy is the right choice this year.”

When you are circling the store aisles or shopping online for gifts, look for the following labels on the toy packaging or on the product page:

- General warning labels listing the potential for small parts, magnets, suffocation hazards, etc.
- Age grading: use the manufacturer’s suggested age range as a foundation for whether a toy is appropriate for the physical and mental skills of a child.
- All toys: “ASTM F963” – this label indicates that a toy meets the latest toy safety standards. All toys sold in the U.S. must meet this standard. ASTM F963 includes guidelines and test methods to prevent injuries from choking, sharp edges and other potential hazards.
- Art materials: “ASTM D4236” – this label indicates that art materials have been reviewed by a toxicologist and are labeled with cautionary information, if necessary.
- Toys with fabrics: “Flame resistant” – this label means that a material will resist burning and should extinguish quickly once removed from an ignition source.

Some things to think about when shopping for gifts for children:

- For homes with younger children, avoid toys with small parts, magnets, cords or strings.
- Choose gifts that are both age and skill appropriate for the child.
- Check for recalled toys at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s website: www.CPSC.gov
- Watch out for “button batteries,” coin-sized (or smaller) batteries that are used in some toys, remote controls, flashlights, hearing aids and more. Never let a child play with these batteries as they pose a choking hazard and can cause serious internal chemical burns in as little as two hours. Make sure that any toys that use these batteries have a screw to secure the battery compartment.
- Watch out for gifts containing high-powered magnets. These small “rare earth” magnets can easily be swallowed by children and can attract one another in the intestinal tract, requiring surgical removal. According to the CPSC, some high-powered magnet sets were found to be responsible for the death of a 16-month-old girl and an estimated 2,900 emergency room-treated injuries between 2009 and 2013, which were banned nationwide since late 2014.

(MORE)

- Avoid no-name products. A manufacturer's name and address is not a guarantee of safety, but it means you can track down a legitimate company to remedy problems.
- Pick up any safety items that go along with a toy such as a helmet for a bike or scooter.
- Make sure that art supplies such as crayons, markers or paints are labeled as non-toxic.
- Look for hidden dangers such as sharp points, loud noises or projectiles.
- If you are purchasing wooden toys, look for splinters or sharp edges.
- If you are purchasing used toys, skip ones with chipped paint in order to avoid possible exposure to lead.

Safety concerns don't end at the register. After the gifts are unwrapped, immediately gather and remove plastic wrapping, twist ties, zip ties, clamshell containers and other potentially dangerous toy packaging materials. Be mindful of younger children and keep small or pointed toys and accessories out of their reach. Lastly, make sure to read any battery charging instructions that come with toys as chargers and adapters can overheat and pose burn hazards to young children.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Information Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov.

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